



Center for Policy Studies, Education Research, and Community Development

A Consortium Serving Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming

High School Reform/Redesign Processes: What Idaho Can Learn

Introduction

High school redesign or reform has taken a place at the forefront of public education policy. While the call for secondary school reform is definitely not new (*A Nation at Risk*, one of the reform movement's touchstones, was published in 1983), the most recent movement became a national priority in 2003. In October of that year, the U. S. Department of Education hosted its First National High School Leadership Summit, which launched the federal *Preparing America's Future* High School Initiative and began to set the current agenda. In 2004, President George W. Bush stated that improving high schools is a national priority, and, through 2005, National Governor's Association (NGA) Chairman Mark Warner (D-VA) promoted his initiative to redesign American high schools.

Why has the push for high school improvement intensified in the last two or three years? The main reason seems to be economics and the increasing global competition for jobs. While the ultimate goal of these reforms may be economic prosperity, the shorter-term goals of reform include the following:

- Increase the number of U. S. students enrolling in and completing post-secondary education (college, vocational training, etc.)
- Increase the number of students pursuing math- and science-based careers, and increase the scores of U. S. students on international tests of math and science

While states and individual schools are using many different methods to attain these goals, those who are driving reforms cite them as the main goals again and again. (Interestingly, these same goals were part of the impetus for the reforms recommended in *A Nation at Risk* in 1983.)

Purpose

The purpose behind this policy brief is to describe the *processes* advocated by national high school reform entities (such as the U. S. Department of Education and the NGA) and those used by states engaged in the high school reform process.

To serve this purpose, this brief will answer the following policy questions.

Policy Questions

1. What are the guiding policies for high school reform for each state (or entity)?
2. How have states created their PreK-16/18 links to ensure transition from K-12 to post-secondary education?
3. What predominant models of high school reform are currently in use/in place in each state, if any?
4. What organizations, research bodies, and consensus building groups (e.g. focus groups, *town hall* meetings, research studies, etc.) are being employed in the high school reform process and which constituencies are involved in each?
5. How are states funding high school reform?
6. What can Idaho learn?

Definition

While the phrases *high school reform* or *high school redesign* are often used, the exact group of practices and goals contained in these phrases may be somewhat unclear. For the purposes of the bulk of the high school reform movement as it presently exists, we may define *high school reform* as all of the practices and strategies used to help assure enrollment in and successful completion of postsecondary training by secondary school graduates. These practices and strategies include the following:

- Installing support and tutoring mechanisms to help more students graduate high school on time
- Increasing high school graduation requirements, particularly in math and science
- Increasing participation in postsecondary credit-earning courses at the high school level (e.g. AP[®], International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment, etc.)
- Engaging students in projects which are intended to demonstrate the relevance of learned material outside of the classroom

What vs. How

While much attention has been paid to *what* needs to be done to achieve the goals of high school reform—such as raise high school graduation requirements to meet admissions requirements of colleges and universities, mandate college- and work-ready assessments for students, and increase the availability of college credit-earning coursework—not as much attention has been paid recently to *how* the process of reform has been undertaken. While it is often an abstraction to isolate practice (the *what* of reform) from process (the *how* of reform), this policy brief will primarily focus on promising and successful reform *process* strategies.

Findings

An overview chart of the findings is presented in Appendix A.

The main processes are listed below.

1. *Creation of a Broad, Diverse Commission or Task Force:* Every reform-minded state has formed a commission or roundtable comprised of key members of the state's education stakeholder groups. Typically, no more than four (or 10-15%) of the members represent state-level education interests, such as the state regents or board of education. Specifically, the Indiana Education Roundtable has 30 members, 12 of which represent PreK-16 education (including one teacher, principal, superintendent, school board member, and the leaders of key organizations that represent those groups), and another 12 represent business and the community at large.
2. *Baseline Research:* Many states conduct their own evaluation of the current status of their high schools. This process may take anywhere from one year (as with Maine) to four years (as was the case with Vermont).
3. *Collaborative Vision of Reform:* Using the baseline research as a starting point, most of the states engage stakeholder groups in conceptualizing *what* the reforms will look like. Some states (Arizona among them) conduct regional focus groups to discuss *how* the issues found in the research may best be addressed.
4. *Use of Policymaking:* According to the Education Commission of the States (n.d.), high school reform is an active legislative policy issue. Of the states listed below, only Arizona and Montana have not passed some form of statewide high school reform legislation. Further, national organizations such as the NGA promote state policies that support a unified PreK-16 governance structure and alignment (2005).
5. *Technical Support:* Nearly all of the states listed below have created (such as Kentucky, Maine, and Vermont) or enlisted the help of (as Arizona did) an organization or entity focused on not only assisting in the research process, but also to implement the reform strategies identified and agreed upon by the stakeholder groups and to evaluate the efficacy of these efforts.
6. *Funding:* Although many of the states below have received external funding, most notably from the NGA and the U. S. Department of Education, many of these states have made significant state-level investments in high school reform. Conspicuous among these states are Kentucky, who has been involved in reform since 1990, and Maine. In addition, the most effective federal reform initiatives are the ones that have been backed with relatively high levels of funding.

Methodology

The methodology for this report is as follows: Researchers with the Center for Policy Studies, Education Research, and Community Development (CPSER) within the College of Education at Idaho State University reviewed pertinent literature; consulted the information presented on official state, federal, and organizational Web pages; and contacted the state-level high school reform information officers within 25 states (9 responded).

National Trends

Secondary school reform/redesign as it has taken shape in the United States appears as an exercise that has as its impetus some national problem or crisis related to improper functioning of our schools. But while the symptoms (and need for reform) may be national, the cure is generally considered a local one. That is to say, the high school reform agenda at the national level—as it has been carried forward by the U. S. Department of Education and nationwide organizations such as the NGA and others—has usually taken the form of a *call to action* or other kind of political will-building for changes to take place on the state and local levels. As such, it may be helpful to examine the reform movement first from the national level, and then assess what individual states have done in response to national calls for reform.

At the national level, the major groups promoting and moving the high school reform agenda forward are the following:

- The U.S. Department of Education
- The NGA and its allies (such as Achieve, Inc.)
- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

U. S. Department of Education (Federal Programs/Efforts)

A Nation of Risk elicited a nationwide response that was stronger than past calls for reform, and organizations such as the U. S. Department of Education and the NGA focused on developing educational reform models that would be replicable across the nation. However, as one researcher put it, “These change efforts were scattered and limited in their nature . . . and they produced uneven reform at best” (Sewall, 1994, p. 5). One response involved a collaboration between the Department of Education and the NGA which produced sixteen education reform pilot programs in eight states. These states—Arkansas, Colorado, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Utah—were led at that time by governors deemed by the NGA to be “leading ‘education Governors.’” (Sewall, 1994, p. 5)

The largest reform movement in public education at the federal level involved standards-based education until 2003. As of the end of that year, President George W. Bush stated that high school reform was one of his top education priorities for his second term. However, with challenges to his No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) coming from many directions—in the form of public criticism and legal challenges—the high school initiative has, to this point, failed to gain the traction that NCLB had previously.

Nevertheless, the U. S. Department of Education has launched and is continuing to promote its high school reform initiative, *Preparing America’s Future*. The major features of this initiative are as follows:

- Two national summits on high school redesign (in October 2003 and December 2004) and one series of eight regional summits (held between March and May 2003)
- State-based high school reform teams that were formed and trained in the *Breaking Ranks II* protocols at these summits (*Breaking Ranks II* is a high school reform model created and promoted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals.)

- The creation of several high school reform grant competitions and the broad dissemination of reform and redesign information via its Web site, workshops, and other publications

One of President George W. Bush's stated education goals is to reform high schools and extend the tenets of NCLB to high schools; the federal government, however, has been somewhat less visible since the beginning of 2005. That being said, many states (including Arizona and Wyoming) have leveraged their experiences from the two national summits and the regional summit to successfully initiate reforms.

The National Governors Association (NGA)

The NGA has been involved in education reform at the national level since, at least, the publication of *A Nation at Risk*. Arguably, the NGA has taken perhaps *the most formative role* in the growth of the education reform movement, as prevailing governmental philosophy relegates education reform to the states.

From about 1986 to the present day, the NGA has published reams of reports and held—in conjunction with its partners and the federal government—five national summits on education. Among the more important steps of the NGA are the following:

- The first National Education Summit in 1989 helped establish national education goals, which included a high school graduation rate of at least 90%, and that U.S. students will be first in the world in math and science achievement.
- In 1996, the NGA and its partners convened the Second National Education Summit, during which Achieve, Inc. was formed as an independent, bipartisan, not-for-profit organization.
- With cooperation from Achieve, Inc., the NGA hosted the Third National Education Summit in 1999. By the end of this meeting, participants agreed to align “college admissions standards with high school standards” (Achieve, Inc., 1999, p. 12), among other strategies.
- In September 2003, the NGA partnered with the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) to host a national forum titled *The American High School Crisis and State Policy Solutions*. This meeting focused on specific strategies for achieving the goals of reform, including the following:
 - o Articulate a compelling and convincing vision for reform
 - o Build consensus and cultivate local ownership of that vision
 - o Build capacity for reform implementation and provide technical assistance and expertise
 - o Review and change state policies as appropriate to fit the new shared vision of high schools
- Upon this foundation, NGA 2004-05 Chairman, Governor Mark Warner (D-VA), launched his *Redesigning the American High School Initiative* in July 2004. As part of this initiative, Governor Warner and NGA, among other things, did the following:
 - o Conducted town hall meetings in Ohio, Arkansas, and Virginia
 - o Convened a National Education Summit in February 2005, during which the NGA released three key documents aimed at helping states plan for and embark on reforms

- o Solicited feedback from American high school students
- o Partnered with other national foundations and organizations to fund two grant competitions aimed at implementing the recommended reforms.

One of the centerpieces of Governor Warner’s initiative—and of the NGA’s high school redesign work to date—is *Getting It Done: Ten Steps to a State Action Agenda*. This document condenses years of research and give specific examples of each step.

Some of the important processes, in addition to those above, include the following:

- Creating a permanent PreK-16 education roundtable or commission that has a high public profile, is given clearly-defined tasks and roles, and involves some of the most influential leaders and interest groups/stakeholders in the state. (In Iowa, this council exists in addition to an appointed board which has governing authority over PreK-12 as well as the state’s community colleges.)
- Aligning demanding college entrance requirements with state high school graduation requirements (which include, in some states, mandating three or four years of math and science—and dictating that students pass algebra II). (In successful districts—such as the San Jose Unified District [CA]—school-level academic coaches were a vital part of having all students meet the new, tougher requirements.)

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Since 1994, the Gates Foundation has emphasized the importance of education and, specifically, of the quality of American high schools. This emphasis cannot be seen more clearly than in simple numbers: as of December 2005, the Gates Foundation has given more than \$2.6 billion through its education programs. Of that amount, almost \$922 million has been distributed for the Foundation’s high school projects alone.

The Gates Foundation, as part of its high school reform agenda, has one major focus: creation of smaller schools. As part of this mission, the Foundation emphasizes what it calls *The New Three R’s*: rigor, relevance, and relationships. Thus, the additional priorities for their projects involve the following:

- Increasing high school graduation requirements, particularly in math and science
- Using project-based, *real-world* learning

According to the Gates Foundation Web site, over 1,900 schools have been improved through the Foundation’s efforts, and most of them through the implementation of the small schools model.

Other National Reformers

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)

The NASSP has advocated high school reform for several years, beginning most notably with the publication of *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution* in 1996. The success of this document was followed by the founding of the High School Alliance—in partnership with the Institute for Educational Leadership and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, among others—in 2002. The sequel to *Breaking Ranks*, *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform*, appeared in 2004, and was quickly adopted as a handbook for reform by such organizations as the U. S. Department of Education (see 2003 federal high school reform summit mentioned earlier in this document).

State-Level Actions/Initiatives

High school redesign/reform has been in motion in some states as early as 1990, but more states have joined the reform movement since the beginning of the most recent national push for reforms, beginning in 2003. The efforts of the NGA, specifically, have solidified the need for change that is felt within the ranks of governors, chief state school officials, and legislatures since Governor Warner's initiative began in mid-2004.

What follows is a collection of examples of successful state-level action from the research conducted by the CPSE staff. While it is certainly not meant to be exhaustive, it *is* intended to provide concrete examples of current effective practice in state-level high school redesign and reform.

Overall, states that have embraced *Breaking Ranks II* and the goals promoted by the NGA have generally done well in their high school redesign efforts. In addition, states that use a grassroots reform support structure, involving all classes of people in the community, seem to score more mileage on their road maps to school reform. A few examples of such states will be given.

Arizona

Arizona at a Glance

- Year high school reforms began: 2003
- Model(s) used, if any: *Breaking Ranks II*
- Technical assistance provider(s), if any: WestEd (regional lab), NASSP
- Key processes of reform include a strong statewide reform team, many focus group sessions to include all stakeholders, and broad technical support and training.

High school renewal initiatives in Arizona gathered momentum as a result of the National High School Summit organized by the U.S Department of Education in October 2003. Arizona sent a delegation to this summit, and upon their return, the state ordered that teams at all schools be trained in *Breaking Ranks II*. Further, the state hosted one of the eight regional high school summits sponsored by the U. S. Department of Education, and Arizona School Administrators received a grant from NASSP to convene a state summit on high school reform.

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) and the Arizona Association of School Administrators (AASA) joined together to invite other key stakeholders to the reform decision-making table, such as members of the business and higher education communities, parents, and those active in civic society. These efforts led to the creation of a state initiative called the Arizona High School Renewal and Improvement Initiative (AHSRI). Therefore, high school renewal efforts in Arizona are largely a result of three bodies—ADE, AASA, and AHSRI—working in tandem.

Important steps in the Arizona reform process include the following:

- *Focus Groups*: Used to gather opinions about the status of high schools in the state, these groups were convened in 4 communities across the state, involved approximately 30 members of the above-specified stakeholder groups, and utilized the services of RISHdesign to create the focus group materials and Westwind Enterprises to write the report (Stumbo, 2005).
- *Goal Setting*: The AHSRI has a set of short-, medium-, and long-term goals for high school renewal. Some of those include increasing high school graduation requirements (short term); training current teachers and administrators over months, not days of training (medium term); and restructuring schools into K-8 and 9-12 units (long term) (Arizona High School Renewal and Improvement Initiative, 2005).

Maine

Maine at a Glance

- Year high school reforms began: 1997
- Model(s) used, if any: None, but Sizer's *Essential Schools* model was consulted, and Maine's Core Principles are very similar to the Effective Schools Correlates
- Technical assistance provider(s), if any: Center for Educational Transformation, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory (LAB)
- Key features of the reform process include bringing together key stakeholder groups, assessing the current secondary school status/performance, and the development and cultivation of a vision.

Maine has a blueprint called *Promising Futures: A Call to Improve Learning for Maine's Secondary Students*, which was born from the work of the Maine Commission on Secondary Education under Commissioner Duke Albanese. The Commission that wrote this document, which was published in 1998, was composed largely of professional educators who sought the opinions of students, teachers, principals, staff members, and parents of Maine high schools. Views and experiences from other constituencies were also sought, and the Commission included Maine Department of Education personnel and university personnel from Harvard, Brown, and the University of Maine, among other institutions. Embedded in this document is Maine's overall strategy for high school reform, the stated goal of which is to produce high school graduates who are the best educated in the world (Albanese, 2003; Maine Commission on Secondary Education, 1998).

In addition, Maine established the Center for Educational Transformation housed in the Department of Education to foster a statewide dialogue about high school reform and to act as an

information and promising practices clearinghouse for reform-minded district- and school-level personnel. These processes are designed to promote conversations among high school policymakers, researchers, administrators, teachers, students, and other stakeholders in order to improve student achievement, provide information and support regarding these reforms, and to discuss the findings of the Commission. It is unclear as to whether or not the Center for Educational Transformation provides technical assistance in these endeavors.

Vermont

Vermont at a Glance

- Year high school reforms began: 1999
- Model(s) used, if any: None found
- Technical assistance provider(s), if any: None found
- Key features of the reform process include a meticulous assessment of the current status of high schools, student “fish bowl” focus groups, and the attempted cultivation of a state-wide “what works” network to spread information about reforms.

The state’s Board of Education created the Vermont High School Task Force, which was mandated to identify critical issues in high school reform. After about four years, the Task Force—which was comprised of a somewhat broad range of stakeholders from the business and K-16 educational community—produced *High Schools on the Move*, a guidance document for reform. Its key components are the following:

- *Vermont’s 12 Principles for High School Renewal*: Among these are Challenging Standards, Personalized Learning, Instructional Leadership, and PreK-16 Continuity
- *Current Realities in Secondary Education*: The Task Force pointed out strengths of and challenges facing Vermont high schools
- *Effective Practices for Initiating Change*: This section of the text provides brief overviews of specific strategies, policies, and practices that embody the 12 Principles. Among them are Personal Learning Plans, Dual Enrollment, Mentoring, and Small Learning Communities. (Vermont High School Task Force, 2002)

Oklahoma

Oklahoma at a Glance

- Year high school reforms began: 2005
- Model(s) used, if any: *American Diploma Project* (Achieve, Inc.), *Breaking Ranks II*
- Technical assistance provider(s), if any: Achieve, Inc.
- Key features of the reform process include strong legislation and funding in support of reform, somewhat inclusive school-based reform teams, a statewide summit, and a collaborative approach to creating and implementing reforms.

In Oklahoma, a combination of several stakeholders—such as the State Department of Education, members of the business community, the Oklahoma State Regency for Higher Education, the Oklahoma Career Technical Agency, and the Governor—have worked hard to

comply with NCLB. However, in the last eight years, Oklahoma had already started developing high standards according to Jennifer Watson (personal communication, February 9, 2006), team leader for Curriculum and Instruction. She stated that the high school redesign process goes beyond what colleges were saying. The superintendent has been very supportive by initiating the conversation and bringing the issue to the state agenda. Oklahoma's High School Summit, on November 2, 2005, was triggered by the NGA Summit on high school reform; it brought together parents, teachers, superintendents, community leaders, members of the State Department of Education and the Oklahoma Higher Education system, and high school summit team members.

The focus of high school redesign in Oklahoma involves increasing rigor, demonstrating relevance of learned material to students, and developing and maintaining strong relationships with students. There is also an emphasis on easing the ninth grade transition and the high school transition into college. Oklahoma is in the American Diploma Project working with 22 member states. They are trying to align state standard benchmarks with those established by the American Diploma Project. According to Watson, the standards and expectations are much more clearly defined in comparison to the 1990's. The legislature has funded advanced placement training for teachers to improve their level of instruction. Oklahoma is working hard to improve data information systems and channels of communication among all stakeholders.

Illinois

Illinois at a Glance

- Year high school reforms began: 2005
- Model(s) used, if any: N/A
- Technical assistance provider(s), if any: N/A
- Key features of the reform process include strong legislative support of reforms (including expansion of graduation requirements and availability of AP[®] courses) and mandatory college- and work-readiness assessments.

In Illinois, the push for high school reform is generally driven by the governor and legislature. At present, there are three major features of high school reform in this state: mandatory college- and work-ready assessments (the ACT, namely); Public Act 094-0676, which greatly expanded high school graduation requirements to include, among other things, three years of math; and Public Act 094-0534 (called the *College and Career Success for All Students Act*), which helps to provide access to AP[®] courses for all Illinois students and allows for teachers to be properly credentialed to teach such courses. (Lynne Robinson, personal communication, February 5, 2006). Education in Illinois is strongly locally controlled, and districts have real autonomy. Thus, high school reform initiatives so far (in addition to those listed above) have attempted to create a common definition of high school renewal.

Indiana

Indiana at a Glance

- Year high school reforms began: 1999
- Model(s) used, if any: None found
- Technical assistance provider(s), if any: Achieve, Inc.
- Key features of the reform process include a broadly inclusive education roundtable/task force, strong legislation to create that roundtable, and a streamlined online method for commenting on education policy changes.

To initiate high school reform, the Indiana Education Roundtable (which is co-chaired by the governor and the Superintendent of Public Instruction and consists of representatives from Indiana's general assembly, and education, business, and community leaders) was formed in 1998, and was formalized by legislation in 1999. The Indiana Education Roundtable has 30 members, 12 of which represent PreK-16 education (including one teacher, principal, superintendent, school board member, and the leaders of key organizations that represent those groups), and another 12 represent business and the community at large. The Roundtable's main task is to improve education in Indiana. To this end, the Roundtable developed the PreK-16 Plan for Improving Student Achievement, which took effect in 2003. Using the completed PreK-16 Plan, the Roundtable is working on high school initiatives in two phases. Phase I is the strategic framework for PreK-16 education embodied in the PreK-16 Plan; Phase II—the implementation of the PreK-16 plan—is currently under development. As part of the state's plan to further the overall goals of reform, the Education Roundtable hosted a high school summit in June 2005, and its theme was Redesigning Indiana's High Schools.

The goals for these changes include improved student achievement leading to a productive and active citizenry. One of the centerpiece of all of this change is Indiana's Core 40 curriculum. The graduation requirements contained in Core 40—among them are four years of English, and three years each of math (which includes either a math or physics course to be taken during a student's senior year), science, and social studies—have been recommended by national reform advocates, such as Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, as a national model.

Iowa

Iowa at a Glance

- Year high school reforms began: 2000
- Model(s) used, if any: *Breaking Ranks II*
- Technical assistance provider(s), if any: Austin-Pacific Consulting
- Key features of the reform process include systematic state- and national-level research, strong collaborations and consensus between those promoting reforms, broad representation from various stakeholder groups, and the use of needs assessment surveys.

In April 2000, the Iowa Department of Education hosted a conference entitled *Reinventing High Schools*, the purpose of which was to “collect public opinion regarding the need for Iowa High Schools to change” (State of Iowa, 2002). The Department determined that a majority of Iowans favored reform and created two task forces to investigate the issue. One group—within the

Department of Education—was charged with handling the study design and providing technical assistance, and the other group—called the Leadership Team, whose members were culled from a broad variety of educational stakeholder groups—had the job of reviewing the research provided by the Department of Education, discussing how the research fit their experiences of education in Iowa, and visiting with stakeholders. This collaboration resulted in the publication of *Foundation for Change: Focusing on Iowa's High Schools*, a comprehensive report that delineates the five characteristics of effective high schools.

Concurrently, Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack commissioned the Iowa Education Roundtable, which was comprised of stakeholders from early childhood, K-12, and postsecondary education communities, as well as representatives from state policymaking bodies and the business community. This group issued several recommendations, one of which was the creation of the Iowa Learns Council, which further broadened the representation from key stakeholder groups and was intended to review the existing Iowa education system and provide recommendations for improvement. As of the beginning of 2006, the Iowa Department of Education is working closely with the Iowa Learns Council, the Governor's Office, and the Board of Education to provide research and technical support for the reform process.

In addition to the above-mentioned support, the Department of Education conducted a needs assessment survey and encouraged community conversations. Just like Arizona, Iowa used the *Breaking Ranks II* model. In addition to the first high school summit (in 2000), another was held in 2004, which built on the interest generated by the public information campaigns spearheaded by the statewide high school leadership team. (L. Irwin, personal communication, February 3, 2006).

Connecticut

Connecticut at a Glance

- Year high school reforms began: 2001
- Model(s) used, if any: None specified, but *Breaking Ranks* was relied upon for the guidance process
- Technical assistance provider(s), if any: State Department of Education, and—while not statewide—a number of districts are served by the Education Alliance at Brown University
- Key features of the reform process include strong legislation at the forefront of reforms, collaboration/assistance provided between governmental units, and statewide baseline data collection.

The approach in Connecticut has been very democratic. One of the primary driving forces in Connecticut high school reform involves legislation—passed and signed by the governor in 2001—that mandated competency-based graduation requirements and the elimination of social promotion. In other words, Connecticut students would have to demonstrate, on a variety of assessments, that they know and can use certain basic skills and pieces of information. Further, students will no longer move to the next grade simply because they are one year older; all grade promotion in Connecticut is based on demonstrated skills. The Commissioner of Education and the State Department of Education took up the mantle to implement these changes. Impelled in part by these changes, in February 2002, the State Department of Education published *Re-*

Conceptualizing Connecticut's High Schools: A Blueprint for Continuous Change. Most notably, this document contains an overview of what these redesigned schools would look like and gives several over-arching recommendations for state action. Subsequently, many stakeholders—including members representing higher education; the commissioner of education's office; business, principal, superintendent, and community associations; as well as teachers and parents—combined efforts that led to the creation of the High School Advisory Council (Connecticut Department of Education, 2002).

Barbara Westwater (personal communication, February 8, 2006), Bureau Chief of Curriculum and Instruction, described high school in Connecticut before these intensified efforts “as very traditional and not meeting the needs of all children.” She added that graduation rates at high school were very low. Students in larger urban districts were not proceeding to college. Westwater remembered, “We want[ed] to establish what is not connecting to students.” The High School Advisory Council contracted private firms to conduct focus groups. The reports resulted in the crafting of goals for high school reform.

The goals for high schools are written in a document, *Framework for Connecticut High Schools: A Working Guide for High School Redesign*. The document emphasizes positive school culture, curriculum, instruction, professional development for teachers, assessment, and the development of school leadership. Graduation requirements are a minimum of 20 credits, with 4 credits in English, and 3 each in math, social studies, and the sciences. Money from an NGA grant (the Honor States Program) is being used to convene a PreK-16 council to streamline governance and to improve teacher quality by providing embedded professional development and alternative routes to certification.

California

California at a Glance

- Year high school reforms began: 1992
- Model(s) used, if any: A variety of models were consulted, but no one model endorsed or exclusively followed
- Technical assistance provider(s), if any: Many partners have been consulted, but no outside technical assistance appears to have been provided
- Key features of the reform process include strong partnerships between state-level education staff, PreK-12 educators, and post-secondary institutions; ready-to-use tools for district- and state-level reforms; and an exhaustive research and study process.

California, by its own claims, has focused on high school reform and redesign for many years. Even within the context of their current reforms, the State Department of Education points back to how this process within the state started with *Second to None*, a 1992 document which helped to establish the vision for California's secondary schools.

One of the bigger landmarks in the recent reform era is *Aiming High: High Schools for the 21st Century*, a 2002 publication, produced by the California Department of Education, which is conceived of as a “how-to document for implementing a standards-based educational system” (California Department of Education, n.d.). This document (a) defines what standards and outcomes to address, (b) delineates how to successfully teach and assess standards and outcomes,

(c) provides support to enable students to meet high standards, and (d) provides information for resource gathering and using data for continual improvement. Further, *Aiming High* has an assessment tool kit that helps school administrators gauge their progress in high school reform. It is worth noting, also, that the *Aiming High Tool Kit* is, in a sense, a living document. While *Aiming High* was completed in 2002, the *Tool Kit* was last updated in June 2004 (Warren, 2004).

In February 2004, California Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell announced the High Performing High Schools Initiative, which has five primary goals that center around high expectations for students, easing post-secondary transitions, and providing support to teachers and administrators. To support this initiative, the Superintendent convened a High School Summit on October 25, 2004. According to the Superintendent, this was the first in California on high school reform. The summit had over 120 workshops and was attended by 2,500 people who included teachers, school administrators, students, business and community leaders, and policymakers (California Department of Education, 2004).

In California, high school reform is high on the agenda of the Governor, as well. On April 8, 2005, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announced a 16-member Governor’s Advisory Committee on Education Excellence, a nonpartisan group charged with examining K-12 education in California and recommending steps to improve the performance of public schools. One week later, state Superintendent for Public Instruction Jack O’Connell appointed 45 members to a PreK-16 Council to examine public education from preschool through university. O’Connell asked the committee to begin with high schools. The council is tasked with developing a seamless system of education from preschool to college, improving student achievement, and ensuring that students get top-notch quality teachers.

Kentucky

Kentucky at a Glance

- Year high school reforms began: 1990
- Model(s) used, if any: *Successful Practices Network*
- Technical assistance provider(s), if any: Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, the Strategic Committee on Postsecondary Education, University of Kentucky Policy Analysis Center for Kentucky Education
- Key features of the reform process include the inclusion of a broad spectrum of citizens, policymakers, education experts, and other stakeholders to inform both the vision of reforms as well as the implementation of them; the emphasis on creating (and publicizing) a shared vision of education reform—complete with progress targets—that is re-examined every five years; and an exhaustive process of state- and national-level research on the status of high schools.

Kentucky has been at the forefront of high school reform for quite some time, tracing their school redesign program back to 1990, when the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) was passed to address school improvement and to increase education funding (Kifer, 2001). However, Rabuzzi and Carson (2001) postulate that “the first major step towards reform was . . . when Toyota located its major North American automotive plant just north of Lexington in 1986” (p. 2). Nevertheless, by 1997, high school reform was well underway following the

passage of the Postsecondary Education Improvement Act (commonly known as House Bill 1 to Kentuckians). While the broad goals of the reforms embodied in House Bill 1 were to build an economically prosperous Kentucky and to create a post-secondary educational system that would improve the lives of Kentuckians, this could not be achieved without consideration of three broad questions (which are contained in House Bill 1). Those questions—Are more Kentuckians ready for college? Are more students enrolling? Are more students advancing through the system?—have a direct impact on the state’s high school education systems.

But before those questions were addressed, Kentucky needed to put its post-secondary educational system on track. One of the prime tools created by House Bill 1 to implement these reforms was the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. This organization has a relatively broad membership from the business and education communities (most notably the post-secondary community). Further, House Bill 1 also established the Strategic Committee on Postsecondary Education (SCOPE), which acts as an advisory body to the Council on Postsecondary Education. Perhaps more importantly, SCOPE—whose membership of 28 includes 21 policymakers, 7 each from the governor’s office, the Kentucky Senate, and the Kentucky House of Representatives—has been “extremely useful” in bringing key education issues to the public’s attention and in “helping secure legislative and executive support for [the Council on Postsecondary Education’s] biennial budget requests” (Rabuzzi and Carson, 2001, p. 5).

House Bill 1 and the efforts of the above entities have coalesced into a number of important guidance documents, policies, and reports. One of the most formative in the early stages of implementation was *2020 Vision: An Agenda for Kentucky’s System of Postsecondary Education*, which was approved by the Council on Postsecondary Education and published in 2000. By law, the Council must review progress toward its stated goals and refine its vision every five years; as such, the state recently underwent this process, resulting in *Five Questions, One Mission—Better Lives for Kentucky’s People*, which is a public agenda for the education reform process that will serve the state through the year 2010.

Another key element of the Kentucky process is that state’s compilation of a great deal of research on high school reform issues. The Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center, formed by legislative action in 1992, has been a key contributor to this process. While not limited to educational research, the Policy Research Center has conducted many key studies to support the activities of House Bill 1. Some of the most essential studies include the three-volume series investigating higher education and how to improve its outcomes: *Education and the Common Good* (Kentucky Department of Education, 2001), *Talking Back: Kentucky High School Students and Their Future Education Plans* (Kentucky Department of Education, 2001), and *Listening to Kentucky High Schools* (Kentucky Department of Education, 2002).

Most recently, the Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center hosted its tenth annual conference in November 2003 which focused on PreK-16 educational issues. Entitled *At the Crossroads: Prospects for Kentucky’s Educational Future, from Preschool to Postsecondary*, the conference and its proceedings (published in 2004) elucidated many of the on-going issues in Kentucky’s system-wide educational reform process.

Influenced in part by the issues raised in the 2003 conference and by a 2004 Model Schools Conference, the Kentucky Board of Education established that *refocusing* secondary schools in the state is a top priority. Currently, the Kentucky Department of Education (2005) is implementing this initiative. One of the important guiding documents in support of this process is the *Conceptual Framework to Guide Refocusing Secondary Education Initiative* (2004). It is worth noting that, within this conceptual framework, secondary education is conceived as a seamless 6-12 system, with built-in alignments and transitions to post-secondary education; thus, it has the look and feel of a 6-14 system in this guidance document.

Utah

Utah at a Glance

- Year high school reforms began: 2003
- Model(s) used, if any: None known
- Technical assistance provider(s), if any: None known
- Key features of the reform process include legislation to increase graduation requirements, bringing together of stakeholder groups through a K-16 council, and a high school reform summit.

According to the viewpoint of Ray Timothy, Associate Superintendent in Charge of Law, Legislation, and Educational Services for the Utah State Office of Education, Utah's high school reform intensified in 2003 with Senate Bill 154 that delineated graduation requirements. The Governor's Office has also been very instrumental in organizing a high school reform agenda, in part, by creating a task force on education and hosting a high school summit in June 2005.

The goals for Utah's high school reform are to increase the rigor of the high school course of study, develop relevance, and build relationships. Specifically, graduation requirements were changed to mandate students complete 4 credits of English, and 3 each of science and mathematics; prior to 2003, the state graduation requirements were 3 credits of English, and 2 credits each of science and mathematics.

Additional goals of Utah's high school reform include improving governance between K-12 public education and the state's colleges and universities. To that end, the Governor's Office, the Utah State Board of Regents (the governing body over institutions of higher education), and the Utah State Board of Education have agreed to collaborate through a K-16 Alliance. Alliance members conducted town hall meetings that were well attended by students, parents, school board members, teachers, and other stakeholders. After these meetings, the Alliance then made recommendations that are reflected in the new goals of high school reform.

Further, the state is striving to make post-secondary learning opportunities available to high school students, particularly through its state-run colleges and universities. The Utah College of Applied Technology (UCAT) helps to serve not just those seeking a career-related credential but also serves—via 9 campuses statewide—those who seek post-secondary learning opportunities in more remote parts of Utah.

The stakeholders who are involved in Utah's on-going high school reform process include members of the higher education community, the Governor, teachers, parents, students, school

board members, representatives of the State Department of Education, and the Regents of the Utah State higher education system. To support an effective high school initiative, the state plans to offer high school renewal grants, as well as teacher academies and a leadership consortium, to help provide a statewide structure for these changes.

Montana

Montana at a Glance

- Year high school reforms began: 2003
- Model(s) used, if any: *Breaking Ranks II*
- Technical assistance provider(s), if any: None known
- Key features of the reform process include use of a clear model, a process rooted in local needs and control, and a careful examination of available models and how they can meet distinct local needs.

Montana's high school reform process began in 2003 when a state team attended the First National High School Leadership Summit in Washington, D. C., and continued when it hosted a U. S. Department of Education regional high school reform summit in 2004. But even after the state sent a team to the Second National High School Leadership Summit in late 2004, not much large-scale change was taking place in Montana's high schools.

In a telephone interview, Linda Peterson (personal communication, February 24, 2006), Accreditation Division Administrator within the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI), gave two reasons for this. First, the State of Montana had been dealing with legal issues in regards to public school funding and spent a good deal of time and resources in court. Secondly, there was still significant groundwork yet to do. While she did not specify, Peterson indicated that a leadership group within the Office of Public Instruction—consisting of *ad hoc* members who had attended at least one high school reform conference or training session—were still trying to get reforms off the ground. Peterson mentioned that, of the states currently involved in the high school reform movement, most of them “are beginning with an end in mind.” Montana does not want to be one of those states. Thus, the State is moving forward at its own pace.

Conclusions

In consideration of the issue of high school reform, its importance to the future of the United States, what numerous states are currently doing to address its implementation, the range of stakeholders involved, funding, and obtaining highly qualified teachers, one is struck by just how complex and multifaceted this issue is. According to Zimmerly, Davis, and Mudiwa (2005), utilization of systems thinking and processes are critical for solving complex, multifaceted educational issues. Clearly what can be learned from other states is their utilization of a systematic approach to studying high school reform within their state and its implementation. In summary, what other states are doing, and what Idaho can learn from those states, can be stated as follows:

- Establish a working committee with representatives from key stakeholder groups
- Inclusion of all stakeholder groups in the data gathering process, which may include the use of focus groups, interviews, town hall meetings, and/or questionnaires

- Conduct a meticulous analysis of the current secondary school status and performance
- Identify, investigate, and secure appropriate funding sources
- Evaluate possible models, e.g. *Breaking Ranks II*
- Develop and articulate a plan
- Communicate continually the status of the planning process and findings to all stakeholders

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Appendix A

State and Year Reforms Started	Guiding Policies for HS Reform?	How Are P-16 Links Created?	Predominant Models of Reform, If Any?	Processes of High School Reform	How Funded?
Arizona (2003)	<i>Arizona Learns</i>	Arizona High School Renewal and Improvement Initiative (AHSRI).	<i>Breaking Ranks II</i>	Focus groups, use of technical assistance, capacity building	U.S. Department of Education grant
California (1992)	<i>Aiming High and Second to None</i>	16-member Governor's Advisory Committee on Education Excellence, Superintendent, 45-member council to the governor's advisory council	None	High school summit, research, production of guidance documents and tools	High Priority Schools Grant Program, state funding
Connecticut (2001)	<i>Framework for Connecticut High Schools</i>	PreK-16 Educational Council, The High School Advisory Council	None	Focus groups	NGA grant
Kentucky (1990)	Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), <i>2020 Vision</i> , et al.	Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, Strategic Committee on Postsecondary Education	No one specified model	Research, surveys, building of stakeholder groups	State funded
Illinois (2005)	Working on a common definition of high school reform	Unknown	No one specified model	Legislation, mandatory assessments	State funded
Indiana (1999)	College and Career Success for All Students Act	Indiana Education Roundtable	None	Building stakeholder groups, curriculum legislation	State funded, NGA grant
Iowa (2000)	<i>A Foundation for Change</i>	Iowa Learns Council	<i>Breaking Ranks II</i>	Surveys, Reinventing High Schools Summit	State funded, NGA grant
Maine (1997)	<i>Promising Futures: A Call to Improve Learning for Maine's Secondary Students</i>	Commission on Secondary Education	No one specified model	Research, building stakeholder groups	State funded

State and Year Reforms Started	Guiding Policies for HS Reform?	How Are P-16 Links Created?	Predominant Models of Reform, If Any?	Processes of High School Reform	How Funded?
Montana (2003)	Working on definition of high school reform	Unknown	<i>Breaking Ranks II</i>		None known
Oklahoma (2005)	Rigor, relevance, and relationships; legislation expanding AP [®] opportunities	Unknown	American Diploma Project/ <i>Breaking Ranks II</i>	The High School Summit	State funded, US Department of Education funds
Vermont (1999)	<i>High Schools on the Move</i>	Vermont High School Taskforce	None	Building stakeholder groups, drafting guidance documents	State funded
Utah (2003)	Bill 154 that delineates graduation requirements	K-16 Alliance on Education	None	Town Hall meetings, high school summit	None known



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